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ABSTRACT

This document presents a set of action-oriented mandates resulting from a conference of black national and grassroots organizations and associations to discuss ways to improve the education of black children. The mandates cover the following major issue areas: (1) school administrators; (2) teachers; (3) parents; (4) students; and (5) policy-makers. Strategies for implementing the mandates are suggested. Appended are a list of the sponsors of the National Conference on Educating Black Children, which developed the mandates; and a list of institutional funders. (BJV)

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# A BLUE PRINT FOR ACTION

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## THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATING BLACK CHILDREN

***On September 5-7, 1986, a broad, representative cross-section of Black organizations; other national organizations, associations, and sectors; members of local/grass roots communities; and local and national institutions, met to discuss, and respond to five major issue areas which impact on the education of Black children. The Issue areas were: school administrators; teachers; parents; students; and policy-makers. The principal conference mission was to produce out of each issue area, an articulate set of action-oriented mandates — THE BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION — which the conference participants would develop and take back to their local communities for introduction and implementation.***

***It was determined that THE BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION would be do-able, implementable, and achieveable.***

***Here, then, presented for local community action is THE BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION.***

***The National Conference On Educating Black Children, urges local communities — their citizens and their organizations — to act on THE BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION, and to report the status of their activity to the National Conference.***

*"We can . . . successfully . . . teach all children"*
— Ron Edmonds

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# THE BLUE PRINTS

## I. School Administrators

| MAJOR ISSUE | STRATEGY | ACTION |
|---|---|---|
| **A.** Need for appropriate training of administrators to meet the needs of Black youth. | Develop a training module for administrators throughout the country in traditional and non-traditional techniques and skills: administrators, teachers and researchers within higher education, community-based programs, public and private institutions. | Establish a Task Force.<br>1) Conceptualize plan<br>a. Understanding specific needs of Black children & how to effectively teach them.<br>b. Analyze and build on proven research and projects on the topic of how Black youngsters learn (environment, groupings, etc.)<br>c. Develop strategies for administrators to implement the plan.<br>2) Experiment & implement<br>a. Identify training sites.<br>b. Select individuals who are committed to this mission and willing to take risks.<br>c. Internships for acting administrators and graduate school students.<br>d. Mentorships & peer training.<br>e. Reduce isolation by building a support base (collegial teams sharing ideas and strategies).<br>f. Integrate community resources.<br>3) Evaluation |
| **B.** Need to share experiences & examples of exemplary models of effective administrative leadership that have impacted Black children. | To establish a national network of those individuals and organizations concerned with educating the Black child. | Organize a Network Diffusion Office of implementable programs.<br>1) Research & Dissemination (clearinghouse)<br>2) Profiles of model schools & exemplary programs<br>3) Recognition of exemplary school administrators<br>4) Mentorship model — on-site visitations to model schools<br>5) Media promotion on academic excellence concerning Black youth. |
| **C.** Need to influence policy-making process and to increase equity for those parties concerned with educating Black youth. | Develop a support system on policy and financial levels.<br>1) private foundations<br>2) existing institutions<br>Develop a state-initiated mandatory in-service training program to sensitize administrators to the specific needs of Black children. | Lobby legislators<br>1) Staff release time/staff development<br>2) Formalize parent involvement in policy-making process (district level) |

## II. Teachers

### Action

1. Establish collaborative programs between schools, community organizations and businesses, i.e., adopt-a-school, mentoring, career days, on-site training, etc.
2. Establish collaborative programs with social and religious organizations i.e., community service, tutoring, etc.
3. Compile a listing of community resources for use by teachers.
4. Devise a plan by which all parents will be involved in some phase of school activity — long-range and short-range.
5. Develop an active outreach program with parents, i.e., visits, calls, letters, newsletters and meetings.
6. Establish a parents resource center.
7. Communicate to parents information that will enable them to participate in their child's educational progress.
8. Conduct staff development and training to make educators aware of the need for and benefits of parent and community involvement in the schools.
9. Develop programs with parents that address mutual concerns regarding social issues that impact upon children's education.
10. Adopt a practice of an annual student-parent-teacher conference to discuss expectations for all. Push for business to release parents for this purpose. Develop plans for non-participatory parents.

### Strategies

1. Showcase accomplishments and achievements of teachers and students by developing a system of rewards for positive action.
2. Locate and develop self-image building activities. Create a classroom environment that is student-centered and enhances student self-concept.
3. Systematically reinforce students' understanding of teachers high expectations for their achievement and their success.
4. Teacher imparts her/his enthusiasm for teaching and learning to students and understands how their display of enthusiasm positively affects students' learning.
5. Utilize the services of counselors, psychologists and other community resources to teach values clarification, coping and survival skills.
6. Continually adopt and/or modify teaching styles to reflect sensitivity to the individual needs of Black students.
7. Use Black American history, Caribbean history, ancient and contemporary African history to enhance student self-image and to develop self-pride.
8. Regularly incorporate into lesson plans the use of positive Black role models from the community to dialogue with students to enhance self-concept and motivate students toward success.
9. Organize discussion groups and debate teams on societal issues as they impact the Black community and the lives of the students. Utilize all available resources.
10. Capitalize on Black students unique talents and learning styles to make them feel good about themselves and as a vehicle to formal learning.
11. Develop and implement programs directly related to the establishment of self-discipline.
12. Provide opportunities for teachers to observe and work with experienced teachers skilled in subject matter, presentation of lessons and classroom management and who demonstrate positive interpersonal skills.
13. Develop a curriculum that encompasses the cognitive, affective, and social needs of students.
14. Emphasize reading in the content areas and critical thinking skills so that students use reading and critical thinking vehicles to comprehend all subject matter.
15. Actively seek faculty input in decisions relating to curriculum and the instructional program.
16. Provide adequate tutorial programs and other support systems during and after school hours with the assistance of community resources to ensure black student achievement.
17. Develop policies for a clean, safe and orderly school enivronment that are articulated and enforced by all staff.
18. Provide staff development which helps teachers acquire improved skills and gain Black cultural knowledge which enables them to effectively teach all students.
19. Emphasize the use of test data as diagnostic and prescriptive tools for improving student achievement, thus discouraging the use of test scores as sole indicators for students' entry, promotion, or detention, in academic programs.
20. Plan staff development which help teachers to understand the nature and expectations of standardized tests and interpret scores accordingly. Incorporate tests in all content areas; develop test-making skills; develop a better match between school curriculum and test content.
21. Require on-going assessment of student progress to provide realistic and timely indicators of students' subject matter.

## III. Parents

### Action

1. Black organizations, clubs, churches and other institutions should co-sponsor a "Black Parents' Week" at least 4 times per year: September, December, February, June. These "Black Parents Weeks" will serve to renew participation and interest in education and to focus on Black parents' rights and responsibilities. Local personalities, refreshments, etc. should be used to get parents "out."

2. In conjunction with "Black Parent Week," fliers should be distributed by Black organizations, clubs, churches and other institutions; to laundry facilities, barber shops, cleaners, supermarkets and other stores, churches, beauty parlors, etc. that list the rights and responsibilities of parents.

3. Local parents groups as well as appropriate committees of Black organizations (e.g., Head Start, Policy Councils, NAACP, Sororities, Fraternities, Chapter I Parents Committee, PTA, Parent Advisory Councils, etc.) should establish a program to train parents in outreach activities. Each trained parent is to be responsible for regular contact with other parents to provide school information, help solve problems and act as a parent advocate.

4. Local parents organizations should obtain information on school policies and programs and use this information to prepare brief, easy-to-read "fact sheets" on important issues for parents (1 page each, maximum) and distribute this information to all Black parents. School publications are often "unreadable to many parents."

5. Black educator and/or Black parent groups should take the initiative to establish an alliance with each other to discuss and act on parents responsibilities and rights and to treat empowerment issues generally.

6. Each local education agency should mandate parent participation, based on local priorities of each Black community and local Black parents groups should provide training to parents on advocacy, instructional support, school policy, and other areas of school organization and function by:

   a. attending board hearings;
   b. overseeing principal selection;
   c. assisting textbook selection;
   d. assisting choice of curriculum;
   e. overseeing/overviewing funding and budgets;
   f. completing a curriculum audit; and
   g. reviewing teacher education programs and teacher certification standards.

7. The Black Family Reunion, sponsored by the National Council of Negro Women and other similar events, should be held yearly, throughout the country and should include a program that focuses on the rights and responsibilities of Black parents.

8. Black churches should become learning halls and should utilize Black parents' organizations to sponsor parent workshops on rights and responsibilities, parent reading and parent tutoring.

9. Every participant in this conference should either provide now or go home and send information on programs that are working in the area of parent empowerment. This information should be sent to a site designated by the conference sponsors and, once compiled, disseminated widely. There must be annual updating and refining of the list of effective parent empowerment programs.

## IV. Students

### Action

Recommended actions which will enable students to assume responsibilities

**A.** Community level

1. Prepare postion papers to support the need for specific programs including statistical data and models that have worked for Black students. Such programs should be of a developmental nature.
2. Identify and utilize diverse community resources which support the academic career and social development of Black students.
3. Establish community homework centers, utilizing community and peer counselors/tutors.
4. Encourage Black parents to advocate programs which support Black students at board meeting/hearings and media events.

**B.** School district and local school levels

1. Coordinate efforts among administrators, teachers, counselors and parents which fully support academic, psychological and social development of Black children — Pre-Kindergarten - High School Levels (use Dr. James Comer Yale Univ. model).
2. Formation of home-school community coalition such as:
   - — churches, community organizations and schools;
   - — sororities/fraternities and schools;
   - — business-technology and schools;
   - — city council, PTO representatives, parents and concerned citizens;
   - — partnerships — schools and industry, schools and foundations.
3. Implementation and evaluation of pilot programs, i.e., National Urban Coalition Program "Say Yes to a Youngster's Future."
4. Development and implementation of comprehensive career education and counseling programs.
   - • Begins at the elementary school and continues through high school.
   - • Development of a network of role models representative of all phases of occupations and careers.
5. Establishment of scholarly societies, such as the Ronald McNair Society for future Black astronauts.
6. Develop/implement political action committees to educate, inform, lobby elected officials at local, state, regional, and federal levels.

## V. Policy-Makers

### Action

A. Eliminate institutional obselescence.
   1. Each institution must adopt a clear affirmative action policy.
   2. Each school agency must adopt a policy which requires that faculty and staff be representative of the racial/ethnic make-up of the student body.
   3. Each school agency must adopt a policy which requires that all screening and hiring committees include Black members.
   4. Each school agency must adopt a policy which requires teachers of Black youngsters to demonstrate knowledge and skills about the history, culture, and language of Black youngsters, and require that teachers who teach in Black schools have pre-service or supervised in-service experiences in these settings.

B. Work to Ensure that Chapter I is Reauthorized in 1987 in a manner which ensures maximum benefits to Black students.
   1. Lobby legislators to reinstate mandatory and meaningful parental involvement.
   2. Lobby to ensure that reauthorization legislation allocates dollars based on an equitable formula.
   3. Lobby to ensure that reauthorization includes dollars to support programs for "at risk" youth.
   4. Lobby to ensure full funding for programs needed by "at risk" youth including academic and social needs.

C. Work to establish a comprehensive equity policy.
   1. Draft and present proclamations which can be adopted at the highest levels of educational institutions. **Example:** The Superintendent of a major school district has proclaimed 1986-87 as the "Year of the Black Child." All efforts will be made to close the achievement gap between Black and White students.

D. Work to ensure the stabilization and preservation of the Black family.
   1. School personnel should interact consistently with community and social service agencies to ensure that all available resources are being focused on solving individual and family problems.

E. Work to ensure equity in standards and requirements and monitor the development of criteria.
   1. Advocate that the National Standards Board for selecting teachers incorporate state and local needs with a special emphasis on the needs of Black youngsters.

F. Ensure that recognition and appropriate incentives are directly connected to the success of Black students.
   1. Every district must have a personnel evaluation policy based upon Black student outcome.
   2. Evaluate and reward schools and personnel based on the performance of students in the following areas:
      A. Academic Achievement
      B. Attendance
      C. Decreased suspensions
      D. Decreased dropout rate
      E. College going rate

G. Allocation of dollars in an equitable manner for the benefit of Black students.
   1. Develop local, state, and federal policies that ensure funding which address the needs of Black youngsters as outlined in the blueprint for action.

H. Establish programs and procedures for utilizing the resources of civic/social systems within the Black community to enhance the education of Black youngsters.
   1. Identify all available resources and agencies (i.e., the National Urban League, Jack and Jill, Links, Churches, NAACP, fraternities, sororities, Black Institutions of Higher Education, etc.)
   2. Establish a local and national clearinghouse to identify and disseminate information about the various resources, programs, and agencies which are available.
   3. Develop a network of local academic support systems for Black students.
   4. Establish relationships with local media and utilize these resources when they are available.
   5. Establish activities to involve retired teachers as tutors or as volunteers for other monitoring activities.
   6. Develop programs and establish sites to teach Black history and culture to Black students within the Black community.
   7. Identify and utilize existing national organizations to facilitate communication and dissemination of information regarding programs and other educational support systems for students in order to increase the awareness of the positive activities in the Black Community.
   8. Monitor the voting records of legislators related to issues affecting the education of Black students.
   9. Respond to negative Black images portrayed by the media and support and promote positive images.
   10. Connect community agencies with target populations.
   11. Each community should develop programs to demonstrate values of Black history.
   12. Establish a vehicle to provide academic support to teach Black culture, and basic skills.
   13. Establish a National Center for Education.
       — Funding for such a center to be provided by the Black organizations identified in community resources list (i.e., Urban League, Sororities, churches, etc.).

I. Boards of Education adopt as policy the five correlates of Effective Schools (Ron Edmonds)
   1. Teachers should have high expectations of all students.
   2. Each school should have an orderly and safe climate.
   3. The school principal should be a strong instructional leader.
   4. Each school should have clearly-defined goals and objectives.
   5. Student progress should be monitored on a continual basis.

J. Instruction meet the needs of Black students
   1. Teaching styles should be matched with students' learning styles.
   2. Teaching staff should be equitably distributed based upon needs of students and school programs.
   3. Ensure that the instruction be as gender-fair as possible.
   4. Assure that the instructional program and pupil achievement is the primary responsibility of the school with the home and community providing support.
   5. High standards of academic and cultural excellence should be set. These standards should include attention to basic skills and higher cognitive skills.
   6. The instruction modality should maximize student engagement and should be child-centered.
   7. There should be equal access to the total school curriculum. Special attention should be given to issues of tracking, labeling and guidance.

K. Incentives should be made available which encourage and reward superior teachers in the classroom who desire to stay there.

L. Businesses should be encouraged to enter into partnerships with schools.

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*"A child miseducated is a child lost."*
**—John F. Kennedy**

*"You can only write so many national reports and pass so many acts by the legislature. Eventually you have to go back and ask what is happening in individual schools."*
**—Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching**

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